

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 07443 260654Z

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /055 W

----- 057683

R 260514Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

INFO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3389

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 7443

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, TH

SUBJ: PHO SU'S SURRENDER

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION BANGKOK FM SONGKHLA APR 25

RPTD FOR YOUR INFO:

SONGKHLA 060

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, TH

SUBJ: PHO SU'S SURRENDER

REF: SONGKHLA 052

SUMMARY: ALLEGED BANDIT AND MUSLIM SEPARATIST LEADER PHO SU WAMAEDPSA IS WITHIN A FEW DAYS OF ANNOUNCING WHETHER HE WILL ACCEPT THE RTG'S OFFER TO SURRENDER. LOCAL RTG OFFICIALS WHOM I RECENTLY MET SPEAK WITH CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM ABOUT THE SUCCESS OF THE RTG'S LENIENT POLICY. REGARDLESS OF PHO SU'S DECISION, MOST LOCAL OFFICIALS VIEW THE RTG'S MOVE AS THE LAST OLVE BRANCH TO THE SEPARATISTS. END SUMMARY.

1. YALA GOVERNOR SA-NE WATTANATHON TOLD ME APRIL 24 THAT PRICHA KOSONPHAN, INSPECTOR, PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AND FREQUENT RTG LINK TO PHO SU, WAS IN YALA MEETING THE ALLEGED BANDIT LEADER. SA-NE THOUGHT THAT PHO SU HIMSELF WOULD SUR-
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PAGE 02 BANGKO 07443 260654Z

RENDER BUT HE CAUTIONED THAT PHO SU HAD LITTLE CONTROL OVER

OTHER SEPARATISTS OPERATING IN YALA AND ADJOINING PROVINCES. SA-NE, WHO HAS GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY, SAID THAT IF PHO SU DOESN'T SURRENDER, THE RTG WILL TURN TO STRONG SUPPRESSION MEASURES.

2. THE YALA DEPUTY PROVINCIAL SECURITY OFFICER TOLD A CONSULATE ASSISTANT APRIL 24 THAT PHO SU WOULD SURRENDER, PROBABLY ON APRIL 27. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT PHO SU WOULD ONLY BRING ABOUT TWENTY PEOPLE WITH HIM, INCLUDING PHO JI UNONG A D CANTON CHIEF WANIT. OTHERS MAY COME OUT LATER BUT THEY WANT TO SEE HOW THE RTG TREATS PHO SU.

3. THE VIEW FROM OTHER PROVINCES, HOWEVER, DOESN'T REFLECT THE SLIGHTEST CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM. THE MILITARY ADVISOR TO NARATHIWAT'S GOVERNOR EXPRESSED TO ME APRIL 24 HIS DISAGREEMENT WITH THE RTG'S "CODDLE THE CRIMINAL" POLICIES. HE DIDN'T THINK PHO SU WOULD SURRENDER. EVEN IF PHO SU DID, THE RTG WOULD NOT HAVE MADE HEADWAY AGAINST THE SEPARATISTS, THE MALAYSIAN COMMUNISTS AND THE PERSISTENT BANDITS. SECURITY OFFICIALS IN PATTANI PROVINCE EXPRESSED SIMILAR COMMENTS.

4. COMMENT: THE "BANGKOK POST" CARRIES AN ARTICLE APRIL 25 QUOTING DEPUTY INTERIOR MINISTER BUNLOET LOETPRICHA AS SAYING THAT GANGS OTHER THAN PHO SU'S ARE THINKING OF SURRENDERING

TO THE GOVERNMENT. THIS IS A FAR MORE OPTIMIST POINT OF VIEW THAN OFFICIALS IN THE SOUTH ARE WILLING TO TAKE. THE DETAILS OF HOW THE RTG WILL HANDLE PHO SU'S SURRENDER ARE STILL TOO VAGUE. BANGKOK MAY FIND THE SHARP REALITIES OF MINORITY REBELLION PUNCTURING ITS INFLATED OPTIMISM. REUTHER MASTERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SURRENDER
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BANGKO07443
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750147-0101
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750412/aaaaalio.tel
Line Count: 92
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 SONGKHLA 052
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 JUL 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <23 JUL 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PHO SU'S SURRENDER
TAGS: PINS, TH, (PHO SU WAMAEDSPA)
To: n/a
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006